

Light curtain

5 This invention relates to a light curtain comprising two elongated assemblies defining between them and lengthwise an area to be monitored, and comprising at least one light source, at least one optical receiver, and processing means able to process the signals received from the light source by the receiver, in order to send an intrusion signal.

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Standard light curtains comprise two long assemblies, one of which has a series of optical transmitting elements and the other having a series of optical receiving elements. It would be preferable to use linear or matrix sensors of the ccd or cmos type as receiving elements, since the performance of these sensors is currently on the increase while their price is dropping, and to adapt these elements and the

15 corresponding processing means to make them suitable for a light curtain.

The aim of the invention is to meet these requirements in a safety light curtain.

20 In accordance with the present invention, each assembly makes, together with its opposite assembly, a surface provided with alternating light areas and dark areas along the length of the assembly and which form a grid, and each assembly comprises at least one linear (or matrix) optical receiver with opto-sensitive points that are located in succession along the length of the assembly, and an optic associated to the linear

25 receiver which is able to pick up the image of at least part of the length of the opposite grid; the linear receiver picks up the image of the part of the opposite grid and sends an image signal of the grid, and the processing means of the two assemblies process the grid image signals coming from their linear receiver to send the intrusion signal.

30 Each assembly can have a single linear receiver near one end whose associated optic covers the whole length of the opposite assembly, the optical receivers of the respective assemblies being located respectively at the opposite ends of the

assemblies. For greater safety, each assembly should preferably have two linear receivers located near both ends, and the optic connected to each receiver should cover the whole length of the opposite assembly, and the processing means should include redundant security processing means dedicated to the monitored area.

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The processing means of one of the two assemblies can suitably monitor the processing means of the other assembly, and the processing means of both assemblies are thus linked by a cabled or optical link assuring the transmission of the diagnostic signal from the monitored assembly towards the master assembly, and the
10 transmission of a sync signal from the light source of an assembly with the optical receiver of the other assembly.

The features and advantages will be seen in the detailed description set out below, with reference to an embodiment of the invention given as an example and
15 represented in the attached drawings.

Figure 1 is a schematic representation of a light curtain in accordance with the present invention.

Figure 2 shows the light curtain in perspective.

20 Figure 3 shows the curtain of figures 1 and 2 in greater detail.

The light curtain illustrated in the figures comprises two assemblies P1,P2 arranged facing each other to cover an area 10 to be monitored. Each assembly P1, P2 comprises a housing presenting to the opposite housing a surface 11 having dark
25 horizontal streaks or stripes 12 separated by slots 13 capable of being lit up or of allowing crossing of a transmitted light beam. The alternating stripes and slots are sized, for example with a width and pitch of 3mm, so as to be able to detect an intruding object such as a finger, etc.

30 Each assembly P1, P2 also comprises two optical receivers R -marked RH1, RB1 for P1 and respectively RH2, RB2 for P2. The sensors R consist of linear or matrix

sensors of the ccd, cmos or similar type. In the present text, the sensors will be referred to as linear, though properly speaking they should be linear or matrix, in order to simplify the vocabulary.

- 5 The sensors RH1, RH2 are located close to one end of the respective assembly (top end in the figures), while the sensors RB1, RB2 are located close to the other end of the assembly (bottom end in the figures). A lens or optic 14 is associated to each sensor and is able to receive a beam of a predetermined angle corresponding to the whole of the striped height of the opposite assembly. As a non restrictive example, this
10 angle can be in the region of 15° to 60° .

The device can operate with a single receiver R per assembly, for example RH1 for P1 and RB2 for P2, each receiver thus monitoring a triangular zone 15 or 16 so that the two zones together cover all of the area 10. More than two optical receivers per
15 assembly can also be envisaged, for example by placing receivers at the ends and also at the centre of the assembly.

Preferably however, each assembly should have two receivers as indicated, to provide redundant coverage of the area 10. This makes easier a safety processing, by the
20 cross monitoring of the triangular areas 15,16 and 17,18, and also allows processing of the position and the size of an intruding object to be determined.

Each assembly comprises an internal light source E1, E2 that is periodically transmitted, synchronously with the activation of a receiver in the facing assembly.

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Processing means comprising circuits 21,22 with added software means are connected to the respective assemblies P1, P2, particularly to control the cyclical emission of light from the light source 17,18 of an assembly P1, P2, to activate synchronously the sensor R of the opposite assembly P2, P1 and to process the image
30 signals. To this effect, circuit 21 has two controllers 23,24 associated to the respective sensors RH1, RB1 and circuit 22 has two controllers 25,26 associated to the

respective sensors RH2, RB2. The assembly P2 is monitored by the assembly P1 or "master" assembly, so that the controller 23 monitors the controller 26 and the controller 24 monitors the controller 25. The assembly P1 has a relay 27 generating an output signal S consequently to the processing and signifying a failure or an intrusion
5 in the area 10.

An optical link illustrated as 28 in figure 3 and located outside the blind area (blanking area) ensures the transmission of diagnostic signals D, more particularly relating to the image of the monitored area, from an optical transmitting element of the assembly P2
10 to an optical receiving element of the assembly P1; the diagnostic signals D result from the signals provided by the controllers 25,26 and are combined by means of a logic OR 29. The link can also be a wire or cable as shown by a broken line 30. The link 28 or 30 also dispatches a synchronisation signal SYNC which synchronises the start
15 cycle signals STR of the respective controllers and the corresponding light transmission signals SE.